

of hard liquor, all of which have the same alcohol content, should not be taxed equally. However, the beer and wine industries want it that way. Expect them to fight to preserve the enormous tax break they enjoy compared to their competitors in the distilled liquor industry.

Beer and wine have long replaced hard liquor in alcohol consumption and sales, but tax policy is still lost somewhere in the 1940s. Hard liquor is far behind beer and wine in consumption and sales. More than half of all alcohol sold today is beer, much of it to teens and college students; 15 percent of alcohol sales is wine. America, especially young America, is getting drunk on beer and wine, in no small part because badly outdated taxing policy make beer and wine cheap. If a can of beer, a 5 ounce glass of wine, a wine cooler, and a shot of vodka have the same alcohol content, they should be taxed equally. The resulting transfer of tax burdens to others at a time of dangerous deficits is particularly untenable in the case of alcohol and calls for attention of this inequity now.

In 1997, the Senate Finance Committee proposed substantially raising taxes on cigarettes to discourage teenage smoking. Many states have done just that. The very same reasoning should apply to beer and wine. Minors consume more than 1 billion beers each year. Teens are price sensitive because they have less disposable income. By taxing beer

and wine substantially less than liquor, we bring the price down and encourage teens to make these the drinks of choice.

Because the Federal excise taxes on liquor are substantially higher than taxes on beer, Congress is sending the message to teens that these drinks are okay and are not as dangerous and addictive. Congress therefore bears a heavy part of the responsibility for the fact that alcohol abuse is the leading cause of death among teenagers and young adults.

Throughout the country, taxing beer and wine fairly would be an important step in reducing alcohol-related traffic fatalities, accidents and disease. The need here is urgent. The bill I introduce today will take the District of Columbia and the entire country closer to the national goal of significantly reducing alcohol-related fatalities.

COMMEMORATING THE RETIREMENT OF STUART AND SANDY SLETTEN

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, when the term milk man is mentioned, it brings back to me the

memory of early morning noises such as the low throb of an idling delivery truck's engine and the rattling of milk bottles coming and going from our front porch. This piece of "Americana", familiar to so many, will be coming to an end this month in my hometown of La Crosse, Wisconsin. On May 30, 2003 the era and service tradition of "to-the-door milk delivery" will come to an end with the retirement of Stuart and Sandy Sletten.

It is with great pleasure I wish a happy, healthy and fulfilling retirement to Stuart and Sandy Sletten as they look forward to taking their first vacation since 1990. This dedicated husband and wife team provided excellent and trusted service for their dairy products route for the past 27 years. For the last 27 of their 42 years of marriage they have worked shoulder to shoulder loading and delivering to their thousands of customers. The life and dedication of this couple represents the positive work ethic and values that Wisconsin citizens deeply respect.

Thank you Stuart and Sandy for keeping alive for many years a small and beautiful piece of our American way of life.